



from left: Roxana Beyranvand, Jill Pardini, Garima Bhatt, Shomari Taylor, Campbell McLean, Mayor Rawlings-Blake, Chris Merriam, Phil Garboden, Amanda Gonzalez, Cristina Duncan Evans, Jason Fair, Daniela Martinez

BALTIMORE CITY MAYORAL FELLOWSHIP

Fellows Learn About the Fourth Estate

On Wednesday, July 28, the Fellows joined veteran WBAL-TV Investigative Reporter Jayne Miller, and Baltimore Sun Editor Andrew Green for the weekly luncheon – this time focusing on the media and its relationship to government.

Miller, who said she came to Baltimore “when William Donald Schaefer was Mayor” and has stayed because “it’s such a great news town,” offered many interesting observations from her long career in journalism.

An average TV news story, she said, “has 90 seconds to get its point across,” which means that government officials need to relay important information to journalists in a succinct manner to ensure that important information is being conveyed accurately. “News and government should be viewed as having a symbiotic relationship,” she said.

“It was great to hear that the expected antipathy between the media and the government is more fantasy than reality,” Fellow Phil Garboden said. “Creating an informed citizenry increasingly requires media-savvy public officials who can collaborate with the press.”



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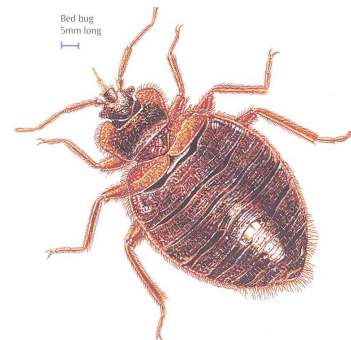
When asked about the age-old topic of media bias, Miller quickly said, “the bias of the news is to try to see what’s new, different and controversial.” She spoke about the common perception that only bad news gets attention by describing what she thinks people most want out of the news. “The news needs to address three things,” she said. “First, is my community safe; second, is my country safe; and third, is my world safe?” Answering those questions, she said, usually involve relaying unpleasant information – but that is the media’s job.

Overall, the Fellows appreciated the perspective of media professionals like Miller and Green. “I especially appreciated their take on Baltimore as a unique news town,” Fellow Campbell McLean said. “With public perception such a huge part of how a city operates, it was fascinating to see how the media lens works.”



Mayoral Fellow Gets Real Press

The Mayoral Fellows' Newsletter has a dependable readership, but it's the Baltimore Sun that can really capture the attention of the City. One of our own, Chris Merriam has done exactly that. The story featuring him appeared as a follow-up article to a previous bed bug piece that was written in 2006.



At present Chris is working with the Health Department on an initiative to help rid the City of bed bugs. These little pests have been getting increasing media coverage nationwide as their numbers continue to grow and cities are frantically seeking solutions to help their residents prevent, avoid, and eradicate infestations.

In only a short time Chris has spoken with dozens of Baltimore residents about their experiences with these critters and has been compiling ways in which the Health Department can best resolve this issue in the City. Concerning his project, Chris had this to say, “We are still in the process of devising a community-based plan on bed bugs, which means that we'll hopefully be teaching community residents to get rid of bed bugs, and getting them to help their neighbors do the same, instead of simply subsidizing exterminations, which is what we've been doing to date.”

Overall the Health Department was “very pleased with the Baltimore Sun story - not just for the publicity, but because it was written well and fairly,” says Merriam and it also helps to get the word out that bed bugs are an issue that the City is working to address.



Mayoral Fellow Profile: Jason Fair

Hospitality and mediation play a big part in Jason's day-to-day existence. He sees these two elements as, "excellent preparation for a career in public service." And serving the public has been a major focus for Jason working in the AmeriCorps, volunteering as an Urban Park Ranger, and being a first-response medic in Israel.

A Baltimore native, Jason has found his experience working with Community Mediation to be both educational and enlightening, "After my mediation training, actively mediating over 25 disputes (most of which were with inmates), I am much more confident in my listening and conflict resolution skills. Similarly, I see Baltimore and our challenges differently—there are interpersonal and psychological dimensions to every conflict."

With a degree in Hotel Administration from Cornell, Jason is currently pursuing a Masters of Public Administration from the University of Baltimore. He finds strong correlations between these academic pursuits, which makes sense when you "think of the public as long-term guests." He is also very aware of the challenges this presents, "To figure out how to provide five-star service on a governmental scale and with taxpayer funding." However, he remains optimistic that the City of Baltimore can make this happen, "By thinking of the citizens' needs first and to then think about the policy tools and limitations I have at my disposal."

For the summer Jason has been working for the Department of Recreation and Parks working on ways to increase revenue for the agency, which seems to compliment his extra-curricular activities such as: sports, the outdoors, and being a park ranger. Concerning the Mayoral Fellowship Jason has noticed how his agency, "is essential to building strong communities and there are hidden gems in the department accomplishing this every day."



"[My goal is] to figure out how to provide five-star service on a governmental scale and with taxpayer funding."

- Jason Fair



I Always Feel Like...Somebody's Watching Me

In 2005, under the leadership of then Mayor O'Malley, a program known as Citiwatch was introduced to the City of Baltimore. At the time the program was heralded as cutting edge and innovative, and has since grown into a comprehensive surveillance operating system that works to cut crime throughout the City. The goal of the program is to "enhance the safety and security of residents, workers, visitors, public buildings, educational institutions, healthcare facilities, cultural, and entertainment attractions, and other tourist venues."

Located on Howard Street in the former business center of Baltimore, Citiwatch has an impressive command center. Fellow Roxana Beyranvand had this to say, "For a moment it felt like I had stepped into an FBI intelligence office or a case of CSI because of all the innovative and superior technology."

The Mayoral Fellows are not the first group to hear the Citiwatch presentation, as police departments, security organizations, and heads of state from all over the world have come to watch and learn from Lieutenant Samuel Hood and Detective Shannon McSpadden who run this Criminal Intelligence unit.

"With over 500 cameras citywide, the department is able to quickly respond to all types of crime ranging from burglaries to hand-to-hand drug transactions," commented Shomari Taylor, a Fellow working at City Hall. He found the "technology to be extremely impressive," but was amazed that, "some criminals don't get the message as evidenced by the criminal

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City of Baltimore Recreation & Parks



Department of Recreation and Parks

The mission of the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Park (BCRP) is "to provide diverse recreational, environmental, cultural, educational and leisure opportunities that will benefit current and future generations." It carries out this mission in a variety of ways from community outreach, to maintaining parks and recreation centers, to holding concerts. The recreation and parks department also provides the largest number of crime prevention programs, services for Youth and Adults, and Senior Citizens programs in the entire City of Baltimore.

Having a quality rec and parks department provides additional value to the City as it improves mental health, physical health, and provides social benefits to individuals, families, and communities. Often facilities and spaces managed and maintained by this department play a pivotal role in securing neighborhoods as they function as the "hub" of their perspective communities.

BCRP works hard to establish community partnerships, utilize the media, and maximize their funding, but it will take a concentrated effort to continue to deliver the quality resources and programming that the City requires under the present financial circumstances. The residents of Baltimore City deserve the best and BCRP intends to remain committed to providing the best services and spaces throughout their 5,900 acres of owned parkland.



Where are they now? Q & A with a BCMF alum!

Each week we feature a former Mayoral Fellow to learn about their experience in the program and what they've done since completing their Fellowship. This week, we feature Abadaya Lashley, whose placement in the Department of Human Resources prepared her to take her current position there as a HR Specialist.

Why did you choose to participate in the fellowship?

A friend from school thought this might interest me since I was pursuing a degree in Public Administration. Government was always something I was interested in for a long time and was grateful to have an opportunity to learn more through the fellowship program.

Do you feel you made a difference in Baltimore City?

In some sense I have. The constant interaction with the people by providing necessary services has helped made a difference in some aspects.

How did the BCMF help shape your life or career trajectory?

After completing the fellowship program I stayed with the agency for a year on a part time basis while I continued to work on my degree. I was able to apply some of what I was learning in the classroom at work and vice versa. The hands on experience made my education experience much more interesting. I also got a chance to learn Human Resources and City Government. With the knowledge that I gained I was able to qualify for a position in DHR after graduating from the University of Baltimore.

What was the most important lesson you learned from your experiences as a Mayoral Fellow?

The Mayoral Fellowship gave me the opportunity to learn more about Baltimore City Government and some of the challenges that the leaders faces on a daily basis.

Do you have any advice for current or future Mayoral Fellows?

This is a great opportunity so learn about government from the insight of a unique city. If you are interested in working in government, Baltimore City is a great place to start. Take time to get to know the people that you interact with on a daily basis because this will open door for you in the future.

How have you contributed to Baltimore City since your fellowship?

I currently work at the Department of Human Resources that provides a number of services to the people of Baltimore and I am part of the team that makes this possible.

Do you have a vision for Baltimore City?

My vision for Baltimore City is that it becomes a safe place for everyone that lives and works in the community.



Abadaya Lashley

2008 Mayoral Fellow

Fellowship Placement (Agency):

Department of Human Resources

Fellowship Project:

Strategic Plan for the Department

Degrees/Year Awarded:

Masters of Public Admin 2009

Current Employer/Occupation:

HR Specialist I: Baltimore City
Department of Human Resources





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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 6th, 2010
Baltimore City Mayoral Fellowship
(Current and Alum) Networking
Happy Hour

August 7th, 2010
Speakers Series: Dr. Alonso, CEO of
City Schools

August 13th, 2010
Community Service: Stream Restoration

Cameras, continued from pg. 4

mastermind that burglarized the same residence three times and was caught by city cameras each time.”

Cameras are active and monitored around-the-clock everyday of the year. When a staff member sees something questionable on their watch they can take control of the camera to follow the activity in question. If need be they can dispatch officers to the scene in order to prevent criminal activity or to apprehend the criminals. So far this technology has led to “thousands of incidents caught on video” and countless number of prevented crimes. Camera coverage is extensive throughout the City and Mayor Rawlings-Blake is committed to the continued use of technology to fight crime in Baltimore City.

